

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

I. Hanoi's Motives to Negotiate

Many individuals (Group A) in Washington and Saigon concerned with our Vietnam policy believe that Hanoi has consciously decided to negotiate from weakness. They cite success of our current force deployments, the low incident count, a new high in hamlet security, and most importantly, they cite the very fact that Hanoi is willing to negotiate.

An alternate explanation is that Hanoi made its decision to negotiate some time ago, feels that it is negotiating from strength, and is primarily interested in getting the U.S. out of Vietnam as quickly as possible. While it is clear that Hanoi formally agreed to negotiate after our recent full cessation of bombing in NVN, a case can be made that Hanoi itself decided to negotiate as long ago as the end of 1966. Through a series of contacts slugged Marigold, a Polish ICC representative named Lewandowski and an Italian named D'Orlandi succeeded in working out a 10-point program that was to serve as a basis for initial contacts between Hanoi and the U.S. While we should retain a strong suspicion that Hanoi was never serious, it was arranged on two separate occasions in December that U.S. and North Vietnamese representatives would meet in Warsaw. Both of these occasions were immediately preceded by U.S. bombings of Hanoi and Haiphong, and the purported contacts never took place. Both Hanoi's and our own positions stiffened after that, but various shreds of evidence indicate that Hanoi continually had its feelers out to initiate contacts after an unconditional cessation of our bombing.

In sum, this may mean that Hanoi was ready to negotiate as soon as that one condition (albeit a big one) was met. Even if this explanation of the timing of Hanoi's decision is incorrect, it could still be argued that Hanoi feels it is in a strong position to continue the war over the long haul. (Most of the paragraphs below bear upon this point.) Its manpower pool remains large, its economy has been growing despite our bombing, and it is receiving ever increasing amounts of aid from its allies. It is equally plausible that Hanoi came to a strategic judgment quite familiar in the United States. This judgment, simply stated, is that severe costs would have to be borne over the long haul, and that its basic objectives could be achieved at significantly lower costs although possibly in a longer period of time by negotiating as rapidly as possible for withdrawal of U.S. forces. This might also explain Hanoi's willingness to reach agreement on a number of procedural points in Paris.

Almost certainly, a lesser important objective of Hanoi in negotiations is to undermine the GVN and US/GVN relations.

2. U.S. Military Efforts

In the last six months our military efforts against enemy main force units seem to be significantly improved. While the announced strategy for the employment of our forces remains the same as before (seek out and destroy the enemy wherever he may be and concentrate on kills), the operational tactics have changed under General Abrams. We are using more small patrols for intelligence and spoiling, and we are conducting fewer large-scale sweeps, and those sweeps that we are conducting are smaller in territorial scope. General Abrams has begun to concentrate much more on area control than on kills. He has been aided in this approach by his defense in depth, particularly around the major cities. Moreover, since our "understanding" with Hanoi with respect to the DMZ, he has been able to redeploy one division from Northern I Corps to III and IV Corps, and to free up for operations in the Danang area a division in Danang being held in reserve for a DMZ contingency. Apparently because of the present disposition and tactics of our forces, the enemy has been deterred from launching large scale attacks and attacks on cities. It could be, however, that we are not deterring him but that he is unwilling to attack at this time because of the Paris Negotiations, or because he is recouping, or because he too may be in the process of changing his tactics.

To the degree that body count is an indicator of the course of the war, the kill ratio between free world forces and VC/NVA forces has remained constant over the last two years (about five to one, with present weekly counts running about 200 U.S. plus 200 RVNAF versus 2000 enemy). Our enemy body counts, according to most observers, has been and remains inflated by anywhere between one-third and a half.

Though we may be tempted from time to time to see the war as growing in intensity or as slackening, U.S. casualties have remained remarkably constant. For example, even though there is presently the appearance of a lull, our killed in action is still about 200 per week. This is true despite the fact that enemy-initiated actions have decreased to their lowest point in the last two years. If we decided to reduce our offensive operations, past experience indicates that the enemy could still keep a figure of U.S. KIA at about 200 per week without more than marginally affecting his KIA count adversely.

3. GVN Force Efforts and Modernization.

GVN regular forces are now much larger (816,000) than two years ago (623,000), and they are much better equipped. All ARVN combat units now have M-16 rifles and are beginning to receive their own required artillery and helicopter support. They may also be better than they were; but how much better and how good they are is purely speculative, and we have in the past been consistently over-optimistic in our expectations. U.S. forces have been increasingly available to join with the ARVN in a fight. All of this has resulted in a greater increase in the RVNAF level of effort (combat days) with proportionately greater resultant contacts with the enemy and enemy kills. There is no evidence that productivity increased VC KIA by RVNAF has been a function of other than size and increased U.S. artillery aid and air support, so the conclusion could be drawn that RVNAF efficiency has remained the same. Outside of questions like morale and loyalty to the government or to the GVN, RVNAF still faces a severe leadership problem (great shortages at captain to colonel levels and generally inadequate performance at all officer levels) and a continually high desertion rate. The officer problem is mired in politics and little has been done to right it. RVNAF regular force desertions (net and gross) hit a two-year high in September 1968. The ground combat forces are deserting (net) at an annual rate of 35% of their strength (gross rate for 1/3 of the units is more than 50%), or twice as fast as the regular forces as a whole (17%). Net desertion accounted for 68% of total attrition during the third quarter of 1968 and equalled 39% of the personnel added during the period.

The RVNAF modernization program is in swing, but not in stride, and the timetables are far from set. Phase I of the modernization program which is expected to be completed before the end of 1970 will bring RVNAF up to 850,000. This will theoretically give the GVN an additional equivalent ground combat capability of 50,000 U.S. troops. The accelerated version of Phase II is planned to be completed by the end of 1972. This will increase RVNAF by another 27,000 and go a long way toward giving sizable numbers of helicopters, artillery and logistic support. This equipment is supposed to be taken from U.S. forces in Vietnam, and the program is designed to be a trade-off for U.S. forces. Insofar as these U.S. forces will no longer have equipment, they will have to be withdrawn. This number is expected to be about 50,000. No additional U.S. force cutback is planned, even though according to the Phase I program 50,000 U.S. troops could be withdrawn without reducing present allied combat capability.

4. VC/NVA Efforts.

One of the basic unquestioned facts about the war to-date has been the VC/NVA ability to match us in combat strength. Many would argue that despite the disparity in gross combat troop numbers, the enemy does field an equivalent force to that of the allied forces. The present ratio of US/GVN/FW battalions to VC/NVA battalions is 1.5:1. Regardless of how inflated our enemy KIA figures may be, there is no doubt that his losses have been enormous. Nevertheless, he has continued to field forces at all levels at a constant ratio to allied forces, and there is no real evidence that his morale has significantly sunk, or that if it has sunk that it does make a combat difference. Predictions throughout the years have consistently been that the enemy is on his last leg; this has never proven correct in the past. The enemy is able to continue his efforts at present levels for indefinite periods of time. Hanoi has sufficient manpower available (NVN forces in SVN represent only 10% of its total regular forces. Also, approximately 200,000 NVN males reach the age of 15 each year.), receives the requisite ammunition and supplies from its allies, and has little difficulty infiltrating these men and supplies into South Vietnam. The potential enemy manpower pool in SVN is also very far from being run dry (approximately 2.7 million males between ages of 15 and 45 not in any GVN force structure, with present recruitment about 3,500/month). In short, it is his will rather than his capabilities or our capabilities that will determine how long enemy main force units will stay in the field and continue to fight. A vital fact to keep in mind is that the enemy can generally determine his own rate of loss. Despite our improving military posture in SVN, the enemy retains the tactical initiative, that is, he determines in something like eight out of ten cases whether or not he will attack or whether he will stand and fight if attacked. Seldom do our operations actually give the enemy no choice but to fight. If he comes to find his losses are intolerable, he can avoid combat and reduce them, without abandoning SVN.

5. U.S. Bombing of North Vietnam and Laos

Available evidence suggests that our bombing campaign from March 31 to November 1 (limited to 19° and below in NVN and to certain portions of Laos) was a more effective way to destroy enemy trucks and materiel than the previous campaign in all of NVN. The CIA considers that campaign to have been the most successful interdiction campaign of the war. For example, we destroyed about 220 trucks per week in these limited areas since April 1 compared to 100 per week in the same period the previous year -- although the difference, in part, is accounted for by better intelligence. The evidence, however, does not establish that our interdiction efforts before March 31, during March 31 - November 1 period or even now in Laos only have imposed a meaningful cost on the enemy, appreciably limited or deterred his efforts in the South, or reduced U.S. casualties in SVN. Intelligence and statistics demonstrated that the more trucks we destroyed the more trucks the enemy dispatched. There is no detectable deterrent effect. Expected enemy losses continue to be offset by inserting more into the top of the funnel in NVN with the USSR, China and other allies paying the relatively modest bill.

Under any circumstances, there has been no evidence that the enemy has had any problem in supplying his forces in the South. Intelligence estimates of the external needs of the VC/NVA forces vary, but most indicate about 40 short tons per day (ST/D) from North Vietnam of which half is ammunition. This estimate is reasonable. For example, the entire RVNAF and Laotian forces (over 800,000 men) consume only 150 short tons per day of small arms and mortar ammunition. The VC/NVA forces are less than one quarter this size (about 200,000) and they consume less because they fight far less frequently and have better fire discipline. The 40 ST/D daily requirement could be provided by as few as 13 trucks reaching South Vietnam each day. Even if the enemy's needs are 3 times our estimate, they could be met with 39 trucks. We must recognize that our bombing did not, does not, and probably cannot, limit the enemy's operations in South Vietnam.

More importantly, the enemy has had and still has the capability to increase his infiltration effort in both men and supplies several-fold. That he has not done so points up the key question with respect to U.S. bombing -- the enemy's intentions and strategy.

Based on available evidence and his past actions, it appears the the enemy has a well-considered plan to maintain a force structure in South Vietnam adequate to achieve his military objectives. This force is provided with replacements and supplies to carry out the enemy campaign. While he intensified the level of combat earlier this year, he probably plans an effort he can sustain for years if necessary. On this basis, the real impact of a cessation of bombing is to permit

him to provide the men and materiel he needs at a lower cost. It does not necessarily result in a big increase in infiltration. It is interesting to note that the VC/NVA combat strength has been maintained at about 120,000 (+ or - 5%) for over two years, despite sharply increasing casualties and a growing and changing U.S. interdiction effort. This indicates careful long-range planning on the part of Hanoi.

The juxtaposition of two additional facts are revealing. First, ever since we began ROLLING THUNDER in early 1965, enemy infiltration has increased as U.S. bombings increased. Second, now that we have ceased our bombings in all of North Vietnam and bomb only in Laos, the enemy has significantly curtailed his infiltration into South Vietnam. He has gone from a post-Tet high of about 33,000 per month to a present figure of about 7,000 per month. (This is a very soft figure.) This latter figure could indicate that he is abiding by the implicit understanding of keeping infiltration at about fall of 1967 levels. This understanding on infiltration is of such a tenuous nature that Hanoi could feel free to step up the pace at any time. One could infer from present levels that Hanoi is trying to coordinate infiltration with a forthcoming negotiating strategy. It could also mean that, because he has taken high losses in South Vietnam including significant losses in combat leadership, he is not prepared to take comparable losses over the long-run while following a negotiating strategy.

The economic price or "strain" imposed on the North was substantial but not critical. The small, modern NVN industrial sector was made largely inoperable, but essential needs for manufactures were met by a stream of military and economic goods imported from the USSR and Communist China, rising to some \$1-billion-worth a year. Civilian casualties were small -- and kept by us as small as we reasonably could. NVN manpower needs were met by the natural increase in the working population and diversion from the normally under-employed agricultural work force, with substitution of women for men in many jobs.

6. Pacification

Called by any name -- the "other war" or "revolutionary development" -- pacification is perhaps the most difficult area to evaluate in Vietnam. More than any other aspect of the war, we have continually over-estimated the degree to which the countryside was "pacified." The question is not which side has "more" control, access, sympathy or support in a given area. The key test is whether VC guerrillas can get what they need, to survive, expand and operate, in areas unoccupied by friendly regular forces. In most places, they can. A key indicator of rural security is whether a GVN official can stay at night in his hamlet or village. By and large, away from district and province towns (except for certain religious sect areas), he cannot.

The goal of "pacification" is to make the rural populated areas a dangerous, inhospitable environment for VC agents, guerrillas and regional forces, by a combination of military and police activity and public cooperation in the form of self-defense, resistance to communist demands and initiative in informing authorities. But neither military nor police requirements have ever been met even moderately; not has much willing cooperation ever been won, in the face of effective Communist threats, from a rural public mainly apathetic or allergic to both sides. As a result, the VC have been able to move freely at night in most rural areas of SVN -- while GVN militia and officials do not -- and to get all the help and information from the public they need. Areas of relative security for a GVN (day and night) presence have reflected occupation, i.e., local saturation with regular troops, rather than "pacification," which, in short, has simply not taken place. In these fundamental terms, our side has neither gained much nor lost much (except, periodically, illusions) in the countryside in the last eight years.

A major reason is the pervasiveness and competence of the Communist subversive apparatus, which can generally be said to "out-administer" the GVN. Viet Cong infrastructure, that is, their political-military organization which takes the form of shadow governments throughout the countryside, exists in 80% of the hamlets, and the better our intelligence becomes the more extensive we find this infrastructure to be. It is estimated that 65% of the total population and 81% of the rural population is subject to some degree of VC influence by the infrastructure. It lays down laws, drafts recruits, and collects taxes in most parts of the country every bit as efficiently if not more so than the GVN. GVN political administrative organs cannot match, and have made little effort to match, this degree of political effectiveness.

At lower levels, hamlet and villages, the GVN apparatus is actually less complex than the Communist, and at all levels up through district and province tends to be less energetic, less informed, less experienced, and less native to and familiar with the area. In terms of population reliability and responsiveness, the situation has remained constant. Experienced people in Vietnam guess that the Viet Cong and the GVN each have about three to four million "loyalists," and that the rest of the population either attempts to remain neutral or swings from time to time toward force majeure. The people remain uncommitted. By traditional means of evaluating pacification, that is, the Hamlet Evaluation System, the situation looks better for the GVN, but even here the meaning of the statistics is questionable. As of November 1968, A, B and C hamlets accounted for 73% of the population. But the key categories to look at are the A and B hamlets, and here the GVN has only about 25% of the total population, roughly the same percentage as in January 1967. Hamlets classified as "C" are really being contested and are still subject to VC influence.

A current "Accelerated Pacification Program" is expanding GVN presence, in the form of militia detachments, in contested hamlets: a useful precursor to a possible ceasefire, but no real basis for improvement in rural security. The program includes a crash effort to "neutralize" VC Infrastructure (VCI), but it is still unclear just how this is interpreted by field officials: other than as assassination or arrest of persons moving at night or found on local, highly-padded lists of "unverified" VCI. That many hard-core Communist cadre or higher-level officials (as distinct from draft dodgers, persons lacking ID cards, personal enemies of local authorities, members of village "people's organizations," coerced laborers for the VC, or more usefully, couriers) will be eliminated, or the Communist apparatus significantly damaged, by such a program is very doubtful.

Crash drives by "amateur police" can produce, on schedule, reports of success, but are no substitute for the patient, coordinated, professional police/intelligence effort against the Communist subversive apparatus that has never been mounted in Vietnam and that must be at the heart of an effective counterinsurgency campaign. Coordination of intelligence for such an effort is just now, at last, beginning, still mainly on the U.S. side, and it cannot be assumed that it will spread to the GVN effort.

In sum, we still cannot be confident that our South Vietnamese allies, or ourselves, know how to pacify, or can come to do what it takes.

ALTERNATIVES

- I. Military Escalation aimed at victory.
Expanded military operations, including ground forces, into Cambodia and Laos and perhaps increased troop levels and resumption of bombing, aimed at obtaining withdrawal of all NVA/VC forces in 1-2 years, leaving current GVN in power.
- II. Current Military Posture aimed at victory.
Continue current force levels and pressures, aimed at withdrawal or destruction of all NVA/VC forces and apparatus in acceptable time-frame (1-2 years; but perhaps longer), leaving current GVN in power.
- III. Radical Counter-Insurgency strategy aimed at victory.
Radical restructuring of U.S. forces into small units in joint command with ARVN, and radical reforms of GVN and RVNAF, aimed at neutralizing NVA and VC Main Forces and destroying VC local forces, guerrillas, and apparatus completely in 3-5 years.
- IV. Negotiated Political Compromise.
Seek to negotiate in Paris a compromise overall political settlement in the South leading to U.S. and NVN withdrawal, continuing present military activities (perhaps withdrawing 50,000 men).
- V. Negotiated Mutual Withdrawal.
Seek only to negotiate mutual withdrawal with Hanoi (rather than involving the U.S. directly in negotiations for an internal political settlement), withdrawing and deescalating in accord with negotiations and actual situation in the field, but meanwhile maintaining military activities of current type.
- VI. Substantial Reduction of U.S. Presence while seeking negotiated solution.
Withdraw all but 150,000 troops over next 2 years, while seeking to negotiate mutual withdrawal or political compromise, but making it possible to stay at a lower cost over the long haul.
- VII. Withdrawal of all U.S. forces in 2-3 years.
Firm public commitment to withdraw all U.S. forces from South Vietnam in 2-3 years, and meanwhile to deescalate U.S. operations in the South, whether or not a settlement is reached.
- VIII. Withdrawal of all U.S. forces within 12 months.
Firm public commitment and actions to withdrawal of all U.S. forces from South Vietnam within 12 months whether or not a settlement is reached.

I. Escalation

Expanded military operations, including forays into Laos and Cambodia, and perhaps increased troop levels and resumption of bombing of NVN.

Beliefs of Proponents

1. Present allied efforts have the enemy on the ropes, but are not sufficient to knock him out. By applying additional pressure now, we can prevent him from recouping and make clear the great costs of continuing aggression.
2. This approach would require a greater U.S. effort in the short term, but will enable us to withdraw more safely in the medium and long term.
3. Because any other alternative would lead, at best, to a confused situation, our allies will support us and U.S. public opinion will tolerate this course.

Military Actions

1. Increase search and destroy operations aimed at seeking out and attriting the enemy.
2. Conduct operations in Cambodia and increase operations in Laos aimed at closing VC supply routes.
3. Perhaps resume bombing of 19^0 , or on previous pattern, or more extensive bombing and mining of Haiphong.
4. Perhaps increase U.S. troop levels to 750,000 or one million.

Paris

1. Accept GVN lead on procedural matters.
2. Break off talks if Hanoi responds to U.S. expansion by abusing the DMZ, attacking cities, or increasing infiltration.
3. Seek to negotiate withdrawal of all Communist forces from SVN with current GVN still in power.

GVN

1. Emphasize need for stability; support present government.
2. Urge but not demand reforms.

Cost

1. Budget costs remain at ~~at least 30~~ ^{approximately \$24} billion/year; could go up to ~~\$40~~ ^{\$46} billion. *if US troop strength increased by 500,000 men.*
2. Casualties increase to 300 or more per week.

II. Current Military Forces and Strategy, Negotiate Victory.

A. Beliefs of Advocates. (omit page).

B. A. Military Actions:

1. Maintain present U.S. force level.

Modification: Reduce U.S. forces by limited amount 50-75,000-
designed and declared to be nearly "streamlining," with no effect
on combat role or strength. *merely*

2. Continue current military operations: i.e., emphasis on defense of Saigon and other cities; multi-battalion sweeps and cordons; increasing U.S. artillery and air support to RVNAF, and re-equipping of RVNAF; military/police efforts against VCI.

C. B. Paris:

1. Let GVN take lead in negotiations.
2. Insist on victory, conditions, i.e., withdrawal of all Communist forces and opponents except individuals reconciled to current GVN.
3. Until convinced of DRV/VC intent to abide by victory terms, avoid ceasefire, de-escalation, and withdrawals.

D. C. GVN:

1. Avoid destabilizing pressures on GVN to "reform" or broaden base, continue law by encouragement toward these.
2. Assume GVN of continued support and large scale U.S. military presence till victory assured.
3. Discourage GVN/NLF talks or accession to power of Vietnam elements inclined to major compromise.

E. D. Costs:

1. Financial costs continue at current rate of about \$24 billion ~~\$30 billion~~ per year.
2. Viet Cong can continue to impose 200 U.S. casualties a week. (10,000 a year). (If willing to accept higher casualties themselves, VC/NVA could impose much higher loss-rate on U.S.) especially if NVA units return). (Given manpower pools and infiltration capability, VC/NVA are physically capable of sustaining loss-rates of _____ per month _____ compared to recent loss-rates of _____ per month _____ and still maintaining force-levels in SVN).
3. If 50,000 non-combat troops removed, costs reduced by almost \$1 billion, *including induced savings resulting from* ~~out-of-theater reductions~~ *from SVN*.

↑
A. *Advocate*
E. Beliefs of Proponents.

1. Group A beliefs.
2. Current levels of U.S. troops, costs, and casualties are acceptable domestically in the U.S., and justified by international advantages of victory, at least for the time required to win DRV acceptance of US/GVN victory (variously estimated: from few months, to 3-5 years).
3. Viet Cong/North VietNam cannot carry out or will not accept costs of major offensive to increase U.S. casualties or produce dramatic setbacks to US/GVN effort, within next 18 months.
4. Although RVNAF improvement is marked, it cannot justify sizeable U.S. troop reductions in next 12-18 months. "Streamlining" to extent of 50,000 troops might be possible, though even this might have undesirable psychological effects on both GVN and Hanoi.
5. Preferable to keep up current military pressure till assured, verified victory conditions achieved, than to accept prior ceasefire, de-escalation, or major U.S. reduction in forces (even if accompanied by NVA withdrawals).

F. Comments on Beliefs:

1. Group B beliefs all highly unfavorable to this approach.
3. 2. Most Group B members would sharply question whether current costs were acceptable to the U.S. public over three or more years, even if victory resulted (which Group B does not expect), and especially if "progress" were slow and ambiguous. And they doubt public would expect great progress, so that new Administration would be widely criticized, meanwhile, for "more of the same."

G. F. Consequences:

1. Most proponents now predict "victory" achieved in SVN within 18-24 months, with or without explicit settlement with DRV; a few believe conditions already substantially achieved, settlement possible almost immediately. Some who accept assumptions above believe victory attainable but will take 3-5 years (some of these still prefer this option, some prefer escalation for quicker win, others some form of compromise).
2. But others (Group) *B reject all beliefs above, and* believe "victory" unlikely short of 5 years, or possible never, by this approach.
even,

3. Risks:

- (a) If VC/NVA launch damaging large-scale offensive - even at high costs - most of above assumptions would be dramatically refuted, leaving new Administration with a "Credibility Gap" comparable to predecessor's.
 - (b) If situation is not irreversibly improved, with "victory" demonstrably near, in 12-18 months, it will have become "Nixon's War," with same bureaucratic/political/diplomatic pressures to persist further as in previous Administration. If meanwhile DRV had made plausible "compromise" offers, Administration would be condemned for throwing away opportunities - uniquely available to it while still unencumbered by prior involvement - to end conflict.
4. If victory conditions are achieved in 12-18 months, considerable vindication (far from total) of U.S. war policies since 1965. Confidence in U.S. judgement and competence somewhat restored, as expectations of domestic and international critics confounded (though total costs still strongly questioned.) Increased confidence in SEA leaders in continued U.S. support. Perhaps less tendency in some (Thailand?) to change policies in ways that would restore undesirability to subversion.
reduce vulnerability
5. Subsequent DRV pressure on Laos - and DRV and Chicom support of insurgency in Thailand - uncertain. In wake of setback in SVN, this might either increase or decrease.

3. Radical Counterinsurgency Strategy, Negotiate Victory

A. Military Actions:

1. Greatly expand small-unit action, ^{seriously at night} in and on periphery of populated areas, ^(within) Within current force limits, this calls for major (though physically feasible) reorganization of US and ARVN combat units. (In July, 1968, only 58,000 out of 540,000 US troops in SVN were in rifle platoons.)
2. Major expansion of CAP units, ^{(combined US-Vietnamese small units),} using US Marines and PF's, as well as US Army and RF's
3. Mobile reaction forces based on periphery of populated areas to keep MF/NVA neutralized
4. ~~Night action:~~
- 4.5. Aim to neutralize MF/NVA rather than inflict maximum attrition; ^(main force) fewer US forces required for this. ^{(mainly mobile forces based on periphery of populated areas).}
5. 6. Quiet support to population-protection forces; including US artillery ^{and air support} ~~Quick~~
- 6.7. Faster re-equipping of RF/PF.
- 7.8. Major effort addressed ^{to} RVNAF leadership problem: officer selection, promotion, command discipline, corruption
9. Morale of RVNAF: pay, dependents' benefits, housing
10. Long-range strike teams for intelligence, air/artillery attack of main force of NVA
11. Reduce daytime, big unit sweeps (by any names)
12. Reduce US troop pressure: as Vietnamese improve, down to less than 200,000 ^{what?}
13. Integrated Vietnamese and US intelligence and police effort vs. LVCI
14. US voice in RVNAF officer assignment; control of US-supplied logistics
15. More discriminating use of fire-power
16. Major emphasis on good troop behavior- both RVNAF and US

II. Radical Counterinsurgency

GVN: Political development strategy:

1. Pressure to broaden support; ^{reform} include all significant non-Communist elements
2. Locally representative District Chiefs, Province Chiefs
3. Population channel for grievances- recourse against officials
4. Encouragement to political parties- preferred broad-based.
5. GVN encouraged to talk to NLF.
6. Means to increase peasant income (eliminate taxes/rents, provide credit increase productivity etc.)
7. Administrative reform
8. Overhaul of police: training, pay, intelligence

Paris:

1. GVN bad lead
2. High demands: but open to mutual withdrawal if we would still have substantial forces there till eg. mid-1970

3. Avoid GVN-VC cease-fire until victory conditions achieved.

Costs: ~~end~~ - 1969: (400,000 U.S.) ~~\$20 billion~~ ^{(including re-equipping and support of enlarged GVN forces), but assuming deescalation.}

~~end~~ - 1970: (200,000 U.S.) ~~\$15 billion~~

Costs: After 1970: \$13 billion.

Casualties: Hard to estimate; ratio of kills probably better than now (more US/ARVN tactical initiative; small unit experience so far), but level depends on VC/NVA policy: How strongly to challenge this approach. Unlikely to be higher than present; might be very low.

Beliefs of proponents:

1. Group B beliefs: relating to low prospects with current strategy.
2. With new military tactics, police/intelligence efforts and political actions, can destroy local forces and guerrillas, while holding off main force/NVA.

3. Facing unfavorable trends in military/political environment, and lacking operational support by local forces and guerrillas. MF/NVA would "fade away."

4. Great changes in U.S. Army and State Department practices required, but these are ^{not impossible} feasible, given urgent need, assuring active Presidential and Cabinet-level initiative.

5. U.S. pressure of unprecedented insight and focus could produce radical changes ~~of~~ in GVN/RVNAF leadership and practices, despite discouraging record.

6. This approach can win (though not certain), while present military course as escalation cannot; and this will almost surely strongly improve non-Communist bargaining position, while others probably will not.

Comments:

1. Effectiveness of tactics entested in VN on larger-scale, though some encouraging local x results (e.g., with CAPS, strike teams), and analogies from elsewhere (Philippines, Malayia).

2. Confronts great inertia against radical organizational/tactical change in U.S. Army, with top commanders skeptical; President "cannot" order. Likewise, resistance to political notions in Embassy, State. Would require great Presidential attention and effort, to assure coordination and overcome bureaucratic resistance, if it is feasible at all.

3. U.S. has not in past been effective in influencing RVNAF or GVN to make any major changes: and these are radical changes (some, including officer situation and present income, even socially revolutionary).

Consequences:

2. Involvement of U.S. - in politics, and in CAP's - in some way more initiate and extensive than before increasing U.S. responsibility and

and making extrication even more difficult (e.g., if program fails). (Hence, also considering bureaucratic effort, probably not worthwhile unless mutual withdrawal is regarded as either unattainable or having unacceptable outcome.)

3. Fearing trends implied by this approach, DRV might either (a) make massive effort to disrupt it, infiltrating on large scale and accepting high escalation; and/or (b) make apparently major concessions to achieve ceasefire and ~~x~~ truncate effort before NLF apparatus much damage, or non-Communist forces sufficiently cohesive for victory. Though this about efforts win clear victory, it might be most likely to to acceptable compromise outcome.

(b) Vietnam elements in count GVN disadvantaged by reforms (broadening, promotion, rent) might fan anti-U.S. feeling, or resist change in ways that would make U.S. intervention appear marked and embarrassing.

5. If successful, the innovators¹⁹⁷⁴ in organization, tactics, and political aims would be applicable to counterinsurgency problems elsewhere.

IV. Negotiate Political Compromise

Seek to negotiate in Paris a compromise political settlement acceptable to the GVN, Hanoi, and the NLF making possible a withdrawal of US and NVN troops; continue present military course but perhaps withdraw 50,000 men

Beliefs of Advocates

1. There exists political compromises which are or can be made acceptable to both Hanoi and Saigon.

2. A communist South Vietnam is unacceptable provided the NLF comes to power by peaceful means following the withdrawal of NVN forces (some believe US must ensure a non-communist SVN)

Military Activity

1. Continue present force levels and military activity.

2. As an alternative withdraw 50,000 men over nine months and describe it as a "streamlining" action.

Paris

1. Seek to negotiate a political settlement and mutual with NVN

2. Put forward compromise proposals with regard to elections and political structures in SVN.

3. Encourage private discussions between GVN and NLF.

GVN

1. Press GVN to broaden its government to include neutralist and to alter its constitution to permit communists and neutralists to vote and run for office.

2. Threaten GVN with US unilateral withdrawal if it does not negotiate in good faith.

Cost

- Small One-half billion*
1. ~~No~~ decrease in financial cost over next twelve months *if 50,000 men gradually withdrawn.*
 2. Casualties at current level (200 week).

Consequences

1. Settlement unlikely within next 12-18 months.
2. Progress in Paris will appear to be painfully slow.
3. Compromise political settlement would lead to communist takeover. Estimates of how likely this is and how soon vary widely depending in part on precise nature of settlement but more importantly in how neutralists act, whether ARVN collapses, and possibility of understanding by Hanoi that it will not move too quickly. GVN could broaden its base and improve its chances over the next twelve months.
4. US will have acceptable responsibility for settlement by pressing Saigon to compromise and will have responsibility for maintaining whatever political structures are negotiated.

IV. NEGOTIATED POLITICAL COMPROMISE

Seek to negotiate in Paris a compromise political settlement that would make possible:

- a) a withdrawal of U.S. and NVN troops from South Vietnam;
- b) a policy of peaceful competition among all political forces present in South Vietnam, including the NLF. This ~~would~~ *might* involve ~~either~~ a coalition government negotiated at the conference table prior to new elections in South Vietnam, or elections under proper safeguards, the outcome of which may either lead to a coalition government or to the acceptance of the NLF as ~~"loyal" opposition~~.

legitimizing of the

Beliefs of Advocates

1. There are sufficient elements of common interest among all South Vietnamese to warrant the search for a formula of political compromise that would create an independent, neutralist, state in the South supported by its principal political forces.
2. There is sufficient interest among all Vietnamese, Communist and non-Communist, in the South as well as in the North, to secure the independence of their nation from external pressures, to make it plausible that a well-conceived plan will obtain the support of the principal Vietnamese political forces.
3. U.S. active participation in the search for a political solution through negotiation in Paris is likely to result in more satisfactory results than if the Vietnamese were left to settle the conflict on their own. The expected outcome of U.S. efforts outweighs the risks involved in the U.S. assuming greater responsibilities for the immediate settlement and indirectly for later developments that may result therefrom.

Actions.

Military Activity in Support of Search for Compromise

1. Adjust force levels and pattern of military operations so as to make it possible for the U.S. to continue negotiations as long as necessary without being forced into unwanted concessions or a hasty settlement by the impatience of the American people.
2. Continue reconnaissance operations and deployment of air and naval forces which would give weight to the threat that we will attack North Vietnam if they fail to make the compromise stick.

Paris Negotiations

1. Negotiate mutual withdrawal of forces with DRV, on the basis of Article 29 of the Manila Declaration.
2. *Participate in* Encourage direct discussions *involving* between the GVN and the NLF concerning the terms of a political compromise (which would involve amendment of Article 4 of the 1967 Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam which prohibits Communism "in any form").
3. *Negotiate such issues as* Offer suggestions for procedural safeguards concerning freedom of political expression, elections, protection of the rights of political minorities, etc., and possibly American assistance to international arrangements for such purposes.

Relations with GVN

1. Use our leverage on GVN to induce rapidly a genuine policy of accommodation with all non-Communist political forces in South Vietnam, such as militant Buddhists, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnards, in order to broaden support for the GVN in its negotiations with the NLF. This policy of accommodation should become visible immediately in a reshuffled cabinet which would include public figures who have the confidence of the relevant political groups.
2. Threaten GVN with complete withdrawal of U.S. support (which would immediately raise the specter of a coup against the present team) or even with unilateral withdrawal from South Vietnam, if it does not negotiate in good faith with the NLF and obstructs our efforts to arrive at mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVA forces from South Vietnam.

Costs

1. Casualties and budget cost may continue at current level while compromise is being negotiated.
2. After the political settlement is agreed, a cease-fire would probably result, which together with U.S. withdrawal, would reduce cost rapidly (say by \$15 billion).

Consequences

1. A successful outcome of U.S. efforts would create a new political atmosphere not only in South Vietnam but indeed in all of Southeast Asia and provide the basis for meaningful regional cooperation across ideological boundaries.

Of most of the ~~costs~~ A saving of \$11 billion with a cease fire and playing down the consequences of 85 forces or withdrawal are planned out.

2. Sceptics will counter that an option based on a policy of national reconciliation in the immediate aftermath of a lengthy and violent civil war is unrealistic, that it is not likely to succeed because in such circumstances eventual reintegration of the national community can only take place after the initial victory of one side, followed in time by the growth of a new spirit of mutual tolerance, a process that might take at least one generation.

3. Even under relatively favorable assumptions, complex negotiations, and the politico-military maneuvers of the contending factions will oblige us to remain involved at a high level of budgetary effort for a period of between 1 and 3 years.

4. Many contend that the probability of eventual Communist takeover resulting from such a settlement is not only high, but higher than from a settlement determined by the Vietnamese with no direct U.S. involvement. Estimates of how likely this is and how soon it will take place vary widely, depending in part on the precise nature of the settlement, the timing of each phase, our willingness and ability to prevent ARVN from collapsing, GVN capacity to broaden its base and improve its chances over the next twelve months, the true extent of popular support for the NLF (which cannot really be tested under present conditions) and Hanoi's sense of timing.

5. U.S. will assume considerable responsibilities by pressing Saigon to accept a compromise and may have to extend massive support to the regime resulting from such a settlement.

V. MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL

This course seeks to meet our essential Vietnam objective of repelling external aggression through a mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVN forces from South Vietnam. *(Unlike article IV, Negotiated Political Compromise, the US does not involve itself formally in the political future of South Vietnam)*

A. Beliefs of Advocates

1. On the one hand, mutual U.S.-NVA withdrawal could give the GVN a fair chance to overcome the VC insurgency gradually. Afterwards, it might survive, ~~like South Korea~~, with an acceptable level of U.S. support. On the other hand, should the GVN and RVNAF be defeated eventually by the VC (perhaps aided by "hidden" NVA cadres), the United States could accept such a Communist take-over in SVN, since it would have resulted from a primarily indigenous conflict.
2. Hanoi might be willing to run the risk of leaving the VC to fight GVN forces or to compete politically after a cease-fire, provided U.S. forces are withdrawing and unlikely to return. The alternative risk of continuing the war for many years might seem worse to them.
3. Mutual withdrawal could be agreed upon and carried out within three years. Indeed, this might be the only important issue on which we and Hanoi could agree. And such an agreement would be the one objective for which domestic support in the United States is least divided.

B. Military Levels and Actions

1. The United States would not initiate withdrawal (or stop it), unless NVA-VC went along with a tacit or explicit deescalation that, in effect, permitted the GVN forces to maintain their present partial control of SVN, and -- to the extent possible under the deescalation understanding -- attempt to extend this control. (Some would advocate that only under these conditions should mutual withdrawal be sought.)
 - (a) U.S. forces play role of reserve reaction for SVN forces providing needed air and artillery support, but refraining from offensives to broaden GVN control of countryside.
 - (b) U.S. continues to provide military and advisory assistance to GVN. (Under the Accelerated Modernization Program -- if successful -- the SVN forces would have significant manpower and firepower advantage over residual enemy forces.)

If shortly in South Vietnam

2. If Hanoi and NLF refuse a deescalation, mutual withdrawal would leave RVNAF in a tenuous position, unless:

- (a) Some territorial consolidation of GVN control of SVN took place; or at least, unless RVNAF refrained from attempts to fan out through the countryside. (Otherwise, GVN forces would have to fight throughout the countryside and defend all the towns and villages they now control while their capability was still being built up, but U.S. support thinned out.)
- (b) A strict cease-fire was agreed upon, in which case GVN control would remain more or less frozen into the present pattern.
- (c) Under either of these two conditions, a quicker war termination and a more viable GVN territory might emerge, if a certain degree of de facto partition was being tolerated, i.e., if the U.S. forces in particular, but also some of the ARVN forces, consolidated their holdings. By no means need such de facto partition be explicitly accepted (by either side) as a de jure division of South Vietnam.

C. Paris

- 1. Discussion of a political settlement would be avoided, or at least played down. (Possibly by referring all political issues to the GVN delegation.)
- 2. The principal choice^{here} lies between a formally agreed mutual withdrawal and a tacitly coordinated withdrawal. If an attempt to obtain an agreed mutual withdrawal succeeds, it would have the advantages that:
 - (a) there would be a clear expression, politically useful both for the GVN and the United States, that the main purpose of the U.S. involvement had been accomplished -- hence U.S. withdrawal was appropriate. This might also be helpful for our SEA allies.
 - (b) in the event of major NVA reentry, the United States would have a better political justification for retaliatory re-escalation -- hence against large main unit re-invasion the agreed mutual withdrawal might give better deterrence than a tacit arrangement.

but the disadvantages that:

- (c) depending on the terms of the agreement, the U.S. troop reductions might be frozen into a specific schedule -- denying U.S.G. flexibility for slower or faster reductions.

- (d) if the agreement provides specifically for total withdrawal, its final implementation would put us at a disadvantage: U.S. troops are clearly identified, NVA soldiers are not. In particular, there are the vexing issues of NVA cadres in VC units and of the Regroupees.

D. GVN

1. Try to maintain good relations with GVN, but not at the price of holding up bilaterals with Hanoi.
2. Give encouragement and economic aid, but don't pressure for reforms and concessions (except, perhaps, for some territorial consolidation under the second variant above).
3. Consider retaining an advisory team even after withdrawal. (This is not precluded by Manila, which just refers to "forces," not all personnel.)

E. Cost

Budgetary savings per year:

- (a) Without deescalation (and one-third of U.S. air activity continuing till withdrawal completed), \$3 billion per 100,000 U.S. troops withdrawn less \$2.5 billion for building up RVNAF.
- (b) With cease-fire, \$11 billion plus \$1.5 billion per 100,000 U.S. troops withdrawn.

F. Consequences

1. GVN forces, even with diminishing U.S. role, would be able to prevent VC overrunning major population centers and could provide strong challenge to VC in countryside (depending on de-escalation understanding).
2. After U.S. withdrawal completed, present leadership structure of GVN would probably change, with degree of eventual communist control determined by reactions of other SVN political groups (Hoa Hao, Catholics, Buddhists, etc.) and cohesion and effectiveness of GVN forces.
3. The time and nature of the withdrawal settlement should allow for adjustments and stabilization in Southeast Asian countries.
4. The question whether or not the United States should refuse to withdraw troops unless North Vietnam agreed to withdraw (or at least not increase) its forces in Laos is discussed in Section 1(8) of The Situation in Vietnam.

VI. Substantially reduce US presence while seeking a negotiated settlement

Withdraw all but 150,000 troops over the next two years while seeking to negotiate mutual withdrawal with or without a political settlement; makes it possible to remain in Vietnam at a lower cost over the long haul.

Beliefs of Advocates:

1. US must remain in SVN for some years to come to prevent NLF takeover.
2. Domestic priorities require a reduction in US forces in the short run. ~~(Some believe we can and should maintain current levels for two more years.)~~
3. Even substantially reduced US forces can prevent an NVN/VC victory. ~~(Some fear that an NVN/VC victory is likely if US withdraws a substantial number of troops.)~~
4. Victory depends on actions of the GVN and ARVN which are at least as likely if US withdraws substantial forces. As long as the US shows no signs of leaving, the GVN has no incentive to reform and ARVN no reason to increase its effort. ~~(Some believe the GVN and ARVN will collapse if the US begins to pull out.)~~
5. Negotiations in Paris, whether aimed at mutual withdrawal of a political settlement, will take many months if not years.

Military Activity:

1. US forces would be withdrawn at the rate of approximately 200,000/year so that only 150,000 would be left in January 1969.
2. As US forces are withdrawn, the US military effort would be limited to the protection of Saigon, protection of US bases and logistic and combat support for ARVN.

Paris Negotiations

1. Not expect or press hard for rapid progress.
2. ^{Accept} Such mutual withdrawal or a compromise political settlement. This alternative is ~~comfortable~~ with either of these two negotiating options which are discussed in alternatives IV and V, ^{if DRV is forthcoming. (though that is less} ~~likely if this option is publicly adopted.)~~

GVN

1. Press ARVN to take over major combat responsibilities. Give high priority to ARVN modernization; turn over to ARVN equipment of withdrawing US forces.
2. Urge GVN to broaden and reform but not threaten to cut off aid.

Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$ billion to \$ billion by January 1971.

2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal; down to per week by Jan 1961.

Consequences

1. If Hanoi increases its level of effort, could result in Communist control of much of SVN. Hanoi may step up its infiltration in an effort to demonstrate to US that its alternatives are ^{with} a high military effort or total withdrawal.

2. If Hanoi withdraws in response, it would lead to de facto mutual withdrawal.

3. ^(or reduced) ~~If Hanoi maintains present level of forces and operations~~
US able to stay in SVN for a longer period at reduced cost.

4. Outcome in SVN will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses, or negotiates with the NLF. There is no basis for a ^{firm} sound judgment in what will happen.

to public commitment to this option would strongly reduce incentives to DRV to come to agreement on mutual withdrawal or a political settlement, or to withdraw its forces at all. Thus, this option is likely to seem preferable to IV or V ^{mainly} if chances of such explicit or tacit agreements seem very low (e.g. after some months of substantive discussions in Paris had been totally discouraging).

Insert in Option III

VI. Substantially reduce US presence while seeking a negotiated settlement.

Withdraw all but 150,000 troops over the next two years while seeking to negotiate mutual withdrawal with or without a political settlement; makes it possible to remain in Vietnam at a lower cost over the long haul.

Beliefs of Advocates:

1. US must remain in SVN for some years to come to prevent NLF takeover.
2. Domestic priorities require a reduction in US forces in the short run. (Some believe we can and should maintain current levels for two more years.)
3. Even substantially reduced US forces can prevent an NVN/VC victory. (Some fear that an NVN/VC victory is likely if US withdraws a substantial number of troops.)
4. Victory depends on actions of the GVN and ARVN which are at least as likely if US withdraws substantial forces. As long as the US shows no signs of leaving, the GVN has no incentive to reform and ARVN no reason to increase its effort. (Some believe the GVN and ARVN will collapse if the US begins to pull out.)
5. Negotiations in Paris, whether aimed at mutual withdrawal or a political settlement, will take many months if not years.

Military Activity:

- 1. US forces would be withdrawn at the rate of approximately 200,000/year so that only 150,000 would be left in January ~~1969~~ ~~1971~~ 1972?
2. As US forces are withdrawn, the US military effort would be limited to the protection of Saigon, protection of US bases and logistic and combat support for ARVN.

Paris Negotiations

1. Not expect or press hard for rapid progress.
2. Such mutual withdrawal or a compromise political settlement. This alternative is comfortable with either of these two negotiating options which are discussed in alternatives IV and V.

GVN

1. Press ARVN to take over major combat responsibilities. Give high priority to ARVN modernization; turn over to ARVN equipment of withdrawing US forces.
2. Urge GVN to broaden and reform but not threaten to cut off aid.

Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$ ²⁴~~24~~ billion to \$ 13 billion by ~~January 1971~~ ^{with de-escalation the cost drops to \$9 billion.}
2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal; down to per week by Jan 1961.

Consequences

1. If Hanoi increases its level of effort could result in Communist control of much of SVN. Hanoi may step up its infiltration in an effort to demonstrate to US that its alternatives are a high military effort or total withdrawal.
2. If Hanoi withdraws in response, it would lead to de facto mutual withdrawal.
3. US able to stay in SVN for a longer period at reduced cost.
4. Outcome in SVN will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses, or negotiates with the NLF. There is no basis for a sound judgment in what will happen.

VII. WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES ~~IN 2-3 YEARS~~

Firm public commitment to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in 2-3 years and deescalate its operations in the South whether or not a settlement is reached.

Beliefs of advocates

1. U.S. domestic priorities require U.S. commitment to be entirely out of SVN in a fixed time.
2. Withdrawal in 6-12 months would cause collapse of GVN while withdrawal over 2-3 years will give ARVN time to take over responsibility for fighting.
3. U.S. commitment will be met by continuing U.S. involvement for another 2-3 years while providing aid to GVN; communist SVN not intolerable.

Military

1. U.S. forces could be withdrawn at rate of 200,000 a year with all forces withdrawn by end of 1971 at latest.
2. As U.S. forces withdraw the U.S. military effort would be contracted and finally limited to defense of U.S. bases.

Paris Negotiations

1. ~~Press energetically for~~ *Aim of* mutual withdrawal with or without a political settlement.
- 2/ Recognize that U.S. commitment to total withdrawal substantially reduces U.S. leverage.

GVN

1. Make clear to GVN that U.S. fully intends to be out in 2-3 years.
2. ~~Provide ARVN with all of equipment it can use.~~
2. Urge GVN to reform but do not threaten to cut off aid.

Costs

1. Financial cost reduced from \$24 billion now to \$7 billion by FY 1972 assuming complete withdrawal of U.S. forces (including air forces) and deescalation.
2. Casualties decline in proportion to troop withdrawal.

Consequences

1. If Hanoi steps up its efforts Communists could control much of SVN before U.S. withdraws.
2. Unless Hanoi withdraws Communist takeover likely after U.S. withdrawal. VC may be able to defeat ARVN even if Hanoi withdraws.
3. If Hanoi withdraws in response could lead to defacto-mutual withdrawal.
4. Paris settlement on favorable terms (for U.S.) very unlikely.
5. Outcome will depend on whether GVN/ARVN pulls itself together, collapses, or negotiates with NLF.
6. Public commitment to this option would strongly reduce incentives to DRV to come to agreement on mutual withdrawal or a political settlement, or to withdraw its forces at all. Thus, this option is likely to seem preferable to IV or V mainly if chances of such explicit or tacit agreements seem very low (e.g., after some months of substantive discussions in Paris had been totally discouraging).
7. Enemy morale goes up.

QUICK FULL WITHDRAWAL

This course involves U.S. public commitment and actions to withdraw all U.S. forces from SVN in one year whether or not an agreement is reached in Paris.

^{Beliefs} ^{Advocates} Assumptions of Proponents

1. The war is unwinnable.

a. No matter what statistics might indicate or official reporters feel, our efforts cannot in the next five years or more get at the political problems that are at the heart of this war.

b. We should, therefore, cut our losses while we can.

2. The Nixon Administration can successfully explain this course to the American people and to other nations.

a. The American public will be receptive both because many are disenchanted with the war and because U.S. domestic priorities require a quick full withdrawal.

(1) Public opinion has responded favorably to every peace move and every act of deescalation by the Johnson Administration.

b. Other nations will understand our actions because we can maintain convincingly that we have met our commitments to our SVN ally by the investment of 30,000 plus lives and the expenditure of \$100 billion.

3. It is important to start the withdrawal process now and complete it quickly because the longer the new Administration retains any forces, the more likely it is to assume an open-ended commitment.

a. It boils down to a choice of doing it now before the new Administration assumes the obligations of the old.

4. The only way to get the SVN to face reality politically by negotiating a settlement with the NLF and to assume the burden of fighting is by the shock of actual full withdrawal.

B Military Levels and Actions

1. U.S. forces are drawn down to zero on a crash basis.

a. Because of logistical problems this could well take more than one year, but we should aim hard at one.

2. We should immediately pull back our forces to base and embarkation areas.
3. U.S. turns over as much military equipment as GVN forces are able to use.
 - a. (If SVN forces could maintain their cohesion, this equipment would be of significant value.)

C Paris

1. U.S. tries to negotiate mutual withdrawals with possibility that Hanoi might be willing to save our face since we would in fact be withdrawing.
2. U.S. maintains a strong declaratory policy against NVN aggression and reaffirms U.S. interest in Asian nations willing to help themselves.

D GVN

1. Say that we have helped them directly as much as we can, and that we will continue to provide economic and military assistance.
 - a. We could keep small non-combat advisory group.
2. Apply no pressure for reforms and actions and be friendly toward what GVN says it wants to do.

E Cost

1. Fastest and cheapest way to ^{reduce} approach 1964 levels of Defense expenditures, but still ~~actual budgetary savings~~ would take 1 to 2 years. *Support of enlarged well equipped GVN forces could cost \$10 billion a year if high level of violence continues. With deescalation the cost would be reduced to about \$7 billion.*
2. U.S. casualties go down to zero rapidly.

F Consequences

1. Probable collapse of present SVN and communist takeover, but some possibility of a non-communist coalition government.
 - a. SVN countryside quickly taken over by VC.
2. Paris Talks become much less important and are unlikely to lead to a negotiated settlement.
3. Initial concern on part of some Asian nations, but no domino process.
 - a. Laos would probably go communist quickly and Thais might hedge their ties with us.
4. Would be attacked domestically for a pull out, but cannot predict depth or dimensions.

BASIC ISSUES

The key issues requiring judgment are:

1. Is the maintenance of non-Communist South Vietnam (under the present or a reformed GVN) of sufficient importance to the U.S. that we should be prepared to continue our current effort for the next 3 to 5 years, or an escalated effort for 1 to 3 years?
2. If not, can we and should we seek to involve ourselves through negotiations in the creation of a government based on some political compromise with the NLF?
3. If we wish to avoid imposing on the GVN and South Vietnam such a political compromise, could we negotiate with Hanoi the end of the phase of massive external military intervention which started in 1965? Could such arrangements with Hanoi be made without bringing about the collapse of the present GVN, but permit a mutual withdrawal of U.S. and NVA forces?
4. Given the success of our current military strategies, do we need to maintain current force levels (549,500 men in Vietnam) to continue present effectiveness, or can we maintain comparable fighting capability at a considerably lower troop level?
5. Should we in any case firmly commit ourselves, accepting the attendant risks, to a continuing withdrawal of U.S. forces over the next several years in order to reduce our own costs and to prod Saigon into negotiating with the NLF and meanwhile taking the necessary steps to increase its own political and military effectiveness?